

EnergyWise Scheme Proposals

A written submission on behalf of the National Energy Foundation in response to the Northern Ireland Department for the Economy consultation paper

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The National Energy Foundation is an independent, national charity, and has been at the forefront of improving the use of energy in buildings since 1988. We aim to give people, organisations and government the knowledge, support and inspiration they need to understand and improve the use of energy in buildings.

We do this through:

- Delivering practical projects – using our experience and technical expertise.
- Inspiring action – providing building owners and occupiers with the encouragement, advice and real-life examples to achieve better performing buildings.
- Advancing knowledge - supporting collaboration to drive forward the frontiers of knowledge, innovation and practice.
- Identifying and addressing market failures using evidence, analysis and ideas.

The Foundation's work

Over the last 25 years, the Foundation has worked with installers and residents of all types of dwellings, ranging from new-build to historic properties, and with all forms of tenure.

Most recently, we have worked on:

- The Green Deal Communities project with several local authorities.
- [Affordable Warmth networks](#) and [helpline](#).
- [Better Homes Better Health](#) programme.
- Bicester Green Deal.
- Retrofit for the Future programme.
- [Green Deal Providers Group](#).
- [Energy Envoys](#) programme.
- [My Home Energy Planner](#) tool.

The Foundation also:

- Operates the online [YouGen advice service](#) on renewable energy.
- Operates the [SuperHomes network](#) of over 200 eco-friendly refurbished homes.
- Provides secretariat support for [Energiesprong UK](#).

Our report, [Homeowners Advice Facility](#), which was referenced in your consultation document, provides a comprehensive overview of how a single point of contact can benefit homeowners, businesses and the wider community.

In brief, a service should support homeowners throughout the entire customer journey:

- Develop a strong marketing campaign to raise awareness and promote the value and benefits of retrofit
- Build trust and confidence by providing quality assurances and promoting vetted installers
- Drive demand by developing influential and innovative partnerships and connections
- Provide advice that is relevant to the full range of household and property types remotely and face-to-face
- Offer advice on available funding streams and alternative financing options
- Promote a 'whole-house plan' approach to assessments
- Provide a project management service or other coordination role
- Prioritise support for and involvement of small local installers
- Provide post-installation monitoring services and guidance on use and maintenance
- Seek a diverse funding stream and aim to build a strong reputation to charge for services in the long term

NEF is delighted to see that many of these recommendations have been included in the consultation document.

1) Do respondents agree that the issues/questions set out in Chapter 6 should be addressed in the design of the EnergyWise scheme?

Clearly the questions asked in Chapter 6 need to be addressed in the design of the EnergyWise scheme. However, other questions should also be included, such as:

- The relevant level of grant likely to be made available to each applicant and whether this will be sufficient to ensure that a whole house approach is possible
- The costs of management of the grant process and how these can continue to be met, in the longer term, without having a significant impact on the cost of measures
- The costs of the advice provision and whether it will be of a sufficiently high standard to ensure that customers are fully aware of all their options
- The requirement for the advice service to include a facilitation service which would procure installers, negotiate individual quotes and provide an oversight of installation service must be considered alongside the risks associated with that provision

A final and major question which must be asked is around the efficacy of the measures installed. In England, we saw the Green Deal and ECO focus entirely on outputs rather than outcomes, which told us how many measures were installed, but not whether they achieved the carbon and cost savings intended. The EnergyWise scheme must ensure that monitoring is an integral part of the process and that a robust auditing process is included.

2) Given the requirement in the EU Energy Efficiency Directive 2012 for an energy efficiency obligation or alternative; do respondents agree that a centralised coordinated approach is more

appropriate than a number of different initiatives offered by a wide range of energy suppliers and/or distributors?

The National Energy Foundation firmly believes that a centralised coordinated approach is more appropriate than a number of different initiatives. However, the centralised approach must be able to learn from the previous successful initiatives and must be prepared and able to consider all potential customers. The delivery incumbent may also feel that an analysis of successful delivery in other parts of the UK may be a worthwhile exercise prior to instigation.

3) Do respondents agree that the grant element of EnergyWise should be recovered only from electricity customers? Do respondents agree that it is appropriate not to collect funding from gas or other fuel types at this time?

Analysis by the UK government in advance of the Green Deal established that the most appropriate collection method was via electricity invoicing, for exactly the reasons stated in your consultation document; all homes have access to electricity, but not all have gas.

Whilst there is an argument to say that users of any fuel should make a contribution, (with grants related to fuel type rather than per household) this would tend to adversely affect the fuel poor. NEF therefore supports the collection of the grant element from electricity customers.

4) Respondents are asked to comment on whether they feel Option 1, 2 or 3 is the more appropriate split between customer groups given that proposals do not include provision of grant for the non-domestic sector.

Option 2 would be the most appropriate, given that grants will be made available to those on combined residential/business users. However, some analysis of the availability of grants to these customers should be conducted to ensure that they are not adversely affected by paying for a service which they are unlikely, or possibly ineligible, to access.